

## **Project Update: June 2010**

The fieldwork for the project has started and already we have collected information from the Sheep Husbandry and Animal Husbandry Departments regarding prevalence of common parasites and infectious diseases in local livestock as well as any reports that have come in with respect to wild animals in the region. Similar information has also been collected from the local pastoralists and we have chalked out dates for sample collection from various pastures. We have also collected information on pasture use from the departments as well as the local pastoralists and are preparing pasture use maps after co-relating information from both sources. These maps will be revalidated in the field in the coming months to confirm pasture movements and resource use patterns.

The local pastoralists were very enthusiastic about the project as they wish to find viable solutions to the various disease outbreaks that take a toll of their animal's health and productivity as well as their income. A major disease of concern is a CCPP-like infection which has been spreading in all of Ladakh at alarming speed and causing heavy production losses and some livestock mortality. Contagious Ichthyoma is another important disease causing heavy mortality in goat kids. Among wildlife, mange and FMD seem to be more common and 'visible'. More interviews will be conducted with the locals to gather more details on wildlife movements and diseases.

We were also successful (and very lucky) to be able to collect fresh faecal samples from one of only two Tibetan gazelles (*Procapra picticaudata*) found in the Hanle gompa- Lal Pahadi region of Hanle, Ladakh. This group is one of the only two Tibetan gazelle groups found in Ladakh. The other (about 30-40 animals) is found in the Kalak tartar region in Hanle. Samples will be collected later from this group, too.

Meanwhile, the preliminary information and project details were presented at an international conference for wildlife health held between 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> February 2010 at the Madras Veterinary College, Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS), Chennai. The preliminary results from the initial field work carried out in May 2010 were also presented at an international conference on wildlife and biodiversity conservation held between 3<sup>rd</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> June 2010 at the Sher-e-Kashmir University of agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST), Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, India. The RSG logo was also used in the presentation and the RSG was thanked and acknowledged for funding support and encouragement of this important project. An understanding was also undertaken with the Department of Parasitology at SKUAST, Srinagar, for processing and analysis of the faecal samples for parasites. They will also be processed at the Disease Investigation Lab of the Department of Animal Husbandry, LAHDC, Ladakh. Both the Animal and Sheep Husbandry Departments have extended their full support and encouragement to the project and promised all logistic and field support for the same.

The next step is to collect faecal samples from wildlife and livestock and get them analyzed for faecal parasites. Meanwhile information still needs to be gathered on economic impact of these diseases, which we hope to complete in the coming months.